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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, January 30, 1931.

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "The Menu Maker." Information, including menu and recipes from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletins available: "Good Proportions in the Diet," and "A Guide to Good Meals for the Junior Homemaker."

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"Planning meals day after day is a real chore to me," one of my friends wrote recently. "I believe I would rather plan a house anytime, because then I could map it all out on paper and know just what rooms I needed and where. In planning meals I never know whether I'm putting in all the foods the family should have for good health and whether I'm spending more money than necessary. Can't you give some kind of a guide for meal planning in one of your talks to help the hard-working menu maker?"

The subject of planning meals for the family is a big one, far too big to be properly discussed in a short chat like this. But there are guide posts to help the housekeeper who is confronted with the problem of planning every day three meals that are appetizing and satisfying, that contain all the necessary nutrients for health, and that are suited to her time, energy, and purse. Yes, indeed. Planning houses and planning meals may not seem much alike, but they are both real jobs, requiring knowledge, skill and some experience in using the correct materials.

The Menu Maker -- or we might call her the Meal Architect -- can build her daily breakfast, lunch and dinner on a group of foundation foods, those needed for the best health of the whole family.

While I discuss these for a few minutes, you might be getting your notebooks and pencils ready for the menu and the recipes. I hope you will have long points on your pencils and plenty of blank space in your notebooks, because I have two recipes for you to take down today and quite a few details about the Sunday dinner which the Menu Specialist has planned for us.

Now to get back to building the daily three meals into a well-selected diet for the family.

The first foundation food to be considered is milk. Ideally, each child should have a quart of whole milk every day and each adult a pint. Skim-milk or buttermilk may be substituted, provided that butter is eaten. Of

course, any milk used in cooking is counted, as well as that taken as a beverage. For older children and adults, cheese may also be counted as part of the milk requirement.

Vegetables come next among the foundation foods. Include in your daily meals two vegetables, beside potatoes, one of which is a green or yellow vegetable. Leafy green vegetables like new cabbage, green lettuce, string beans, spinach, and other greens, as well as raw vegetables, are of special value for the iron and vitamins they supply.

What about fruits? They belong on the list also. Each day include two servings of fruits in your meals, one of which should be a citrus fruit, like orange or grapefruit, or tomatoes. Of course, you don't have to be reminded that tomatoes, canned or fresh, can be substituted for oranges in the diet. Tomato juice can even be given to babies in place of orange juice, if oranges are expensive or scarce. Other fruits to be depended on at this season of the year are apples, dried fruits, and canned fruits. Here let me say a word of praise for dried fruits. They are inexpensive, supply much needed minerals and can be used in so many delicious ways, that they deserve to be used frequently.

Then, there are the grain products, such as cereals and breads, to be considered. Some cereals, especially whole grain cereals like whole wheat or rolled oats, should be eaten every day. The amount used in the form of porridge and pudding will, of course, depend on the amount of bread eaten, as these foods supply starch for energy, but whole grain products are particularly recommended because they provide some of the necessary minerals as well as starch.

So far we have discussed just four foundation foods for everyday use -- milk, vegetables, fruits, and cereals or grain foods. Beside these we need protein foods for body building or repair. These foods, which are chiefly used as main dishes at dinner and supper, include meat, fish, poultry, eggs, cheese, and even dried beans, peas or peanuts. Meat several times a week, eggs several times a week or every day if possible, and fish at least once a week is the ideal allowance for the average family. The Menu Maker must be guided by her purse, however, in serving the more expensive foods. If the amount of meat allowed is small, the meat flavor can be extended and the whole meal made more palatable if vegetables are cooked with it. Onions, carrots, celery, and tomatoes used in small amounts heighten the flavor of stews and soups and at the same time add to the attractiveness of meals. Part of your weekly supply of vegetables might be put aside for just this purpose.

With milk, vegetables, fruits, grain foods and protein foods as a basis, the housekeeper can add whatever extras are needed to fill out her meals. Simple meals are usually best, not only for the family's purse, but also for the family's health. Plenty of a few foods satisfies the appetite better than many different foods in one meal. Someday soon I want to discuss planning low-cost meals, but just now it's time for me to give you our dinner menu and those two recipes I mentioned.

Are you ready now for the menu? Here it is: Vegetable vitamin soup; Broiled fresh fish; Hot spoon bread; Harvard beets; and, for dessert, Lemon Snow with custard sauce.

Plenty of contrast is here, you see, to make this a successful fish dinner -- bright vegetables to contrast with the fish in color, an interesting tart flavor in vegetables and dessert to offer a contrast in flavor, and a cornmeal bread for contrast in texture. Cornmeal bread is one of those foods that just seem to belong with fish, and in the South is usually served with it.

Your green recipe book has directions for vegetable vitamin soup on page 9. This soup contains so many vegetables that only one is needed to serve with the fish.

The Recipe Lady suggests that mackerel, perch, trout or rock fish may be used, or any other fresh fish which your market supplies. Have the fish split down the back. Wipe it clean and remove any scales, and the head and tail if desired. Lay the fish, skin down, on a greased shallow pan. If it is oily, no fat need be added; otherwise, add enough to season well. Place the fish under the flame in a broiler at moderate heat and cook for 20 or 30 minutes. Slip the broiled fish carefully onto a hot platter, season with salt and pepper, pour in the drippings, garnish with cress or parsley and sliced lemon, and serve at once. If the fish is very large and thick, heat for 15 to 20 minutes in a moderate oven before putting it under the broiler flame.

Spoon bread made from cornmeal takes the place of both a starchy vegetable and a bread. I'll give you the recipe for spoon bread. It contains just six ingredients.

1 cup of cornmeal
2 cups of cold water
1 cup of milk

2 or 3 eggs
2 tablespoons of melted fat, and
2 teaspoons of salt.

I'll repeat that list: (REPEAT).

Mix the meal, water and salt, and boil for 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Add the well-beaten eggs, milk and melted fat, and mix well. Pour in a well-greased hot pan or baking dish and bake for 45 to 50 minutes in a hot oven (400 degrees F.). Serve from the pan in which it is baked.

For Harvard beets, look on page 15 of the Radio Recipe Book. Because of their tart yet sweet flavor and their bright color, they go particularly well with the fish and spoon bread.

For dessert the Menu Specialist has chosen lemon snow, one of those delicious gelatin sponge desserts that make such a pleasant change from the usual plain fruit jelly. The chief difference in making this from making lemon jelly is that the gelatin mixture is beaten with an egg beater when it begins to thicken and then beaten egg white is folded in.

